

life lessons that go well beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic. Years before I served in the Nebraska legislature, I served on my local school board, as president of the Nebraska Association of School Boards, and on the Nebraska School Finance Review Committee. These experiences helped shape my views on education policy as a state lawmaker, and they continue to inform my work here in the Senate.

Nebraska is truly fortunate to have excellent schools. Each school district has unique strengths, and they face challenges that are specific to their schools and to the students. Because of this, parents, teachers, school boards, and communities are in the best position to know the needs of their students. They are an integral part of every child's academic success.

That is why I believe education decisions are best made at the State and especially at the local level. The role of the Federal Government should be to promote policies that will improve the ability of individual States to meet the needs of their specific communities. To that end, I have worked with my colleagues, Senator KING and Senator TESTER, to offer an amendment promoting local governance in education.

The purpose of this bipartisan amendment is simple: to ensure that our local school districts are not coerced into adopting misguided education requirements. It ensures that our local stakeholders have a stronger voice in both the regulatory and the guidance process. This amendment would ensure that communities have ultimate authority over their school districts. It also strengthens the relationship among school board members and parents.

These changes are long overdue. We must limit Federal intrusion into local education policy. As we prepare for the first day of school, Nebraska is focused on providing students with a well-rounded education. We must ensure that our public policy enhances the classroom experience, provides essential resources to student success, and helps place our students on the path for successful futures.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

EVERY CHILD ACHIEVES ACT

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to support the bipartisan Every Child Achieves Act. This bill is landmark legislation that would reform and reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as No Child Left Behind. This bill would improve our schools and strengthen the traditional roles played by our local communities, our educators, and our States.

I am proud to have joined every member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in voting to report this bill and I applaud the chairman, Senator ALEX-

ANDER, and the ranking member, Senator MURRAY, for their leadership.

Congressional action to remedy the serious problems with the law No Child Left Behind, while preserving its valuable parts, is long overdue. NCLB was a well-intentioned law, and its focus on the education of every child, greater transparency in school performance, and more accountability for results were welcome reforms. But some of its provisions were simply not achievable and thus discouraging to teachers, to parents, and to students alike.

The current system of unattainable standards and a patchwork of State waivers has led to confusion about Federal requirements. High-stakes testing and unrealistic 100-percent proficiency goals do not raise aspirations; they instead dispirit those who are committed to a high-quality education for our students. Responding to those concerns in 2004, along with then-Senator Olympia Snowe, I established the Maine NCLB Task Force to examine the issues facing Maine and to provide recommendations for changes to No Child Left Behind.

Our task force brought together individuals with a great deal of expertise, experience, and perspective on the law and on educational policy in general. The task force included teachers, principals, superintendents, school board members, parents, and State officials. It was cochaired by Leo Martin, a former commissioner of the Maine Department of Education, and Anne Pooler, a former professor and then-associate dean at the College of Education at the University of Maine. The task force completed its work in 2005.

Well, our Maine NCLB task force proved to be prescient in identifying the problems with implementing No Child Left Behind, and 10 years later its report is as relevant as ever.

Chief among the task force's final recommendations was the need for greater flexibility for the State department of education and for local school boards. The members pointed out that the principles of improved student performance and closing achievement gaps were completely compatible with according States more flexibility to design different accountability systems.

Reflecting that recommendation, the bill before us, the Every Child Achieves Act, would remove the high-stakes accountability system that has been proven unworkable under No Child Left Behind. Our bill would give States much-needed flexibility over how to improve the accountability of schools for student achievement. Recognizing also the critical importance of family engagement in education, the bill supports school districts in conducting parent outreach and participation activities.

The Every Child Achieves Act would also eliminate the burdensome definition of a "highly qualified teacher" which has proven to be unworkable in Maine's small, rural schools. In such schools, the reality is that teachers

must often teach multiple subjects and are reassigned to different content areas because of low enrollment.

For example, on Maine's North Haven Island, there is one school that serves all students from kindergarten through the 12th grade. With fewer than 70 students, North Haven Community School is one of the smallest K-through-12 schools in my State. It is not surprising that the educators at the North Haven Community School teach multiple subject areas across the different grades because of the school's size.

Speaking of smaller schools, I am particularly pleased that the Every Child Achieves Act would extend the Rural Education Achievement Program, known as REAP, which I coauthored with former Senator Kent Conrad in 2002. Students in rural America should have the same access to Federal grant dollars as those who attend schools in large urban and suburban communities. Most Federal competitive grant programs, however, favor larger school districts because those are the districts that have the ability to hire grant writers to apply for these grants. If you are in a school district such as North Haven, which only has 70 students for all the grades, you don't have the luxury of extra funds to hire grant writers to apply for these competitive grant programs.

What REAP does is provides financial assistance to small and high-poverty rural districts to help them address their unique local needs and also to meet Federal requirements. This program has helped to support new technology in classrooms, distance learning opportunities, professional development for educators, as well as an array of other programs that benefit students and teachers in rural districts. Since the law was enacted, at least 120 Maine school districts have collectively received more than \$42 million from the Rural Education Achievement Program. That is money which has made a real difference to these small, rural, high-poverty districts, and it is Federal funds that they would never have been able to successfully compete for when they were applying against large, urban school districts.

Maine's educators are working hard to develop high-quality assessments that better track student performance and growth. I am pleased that the Every Child Achieves Act includes a pilot program to support States that are designing alternative assessment systems based on student proficiency, not just traditional standardized tests. Such systems often give teachers, parents, and students a fuller understanding of each student's abilities and better prepare them for college or the career path they choose. The Federal Government should cooperate with States and school districts that are designing new assessment systems, and this pilot program is an important step in the right direction.

During the committee's consideration of this bill, I offered an amendment with Senator SANDERS to allow more States to participate in the innovative assessment program and to give participating school districts more time to scale up their systems statewide. Our amendment passed unanimously in committee, and I thank Chairman ALEXANDER and Ranking Member MURRAY for continuing to work with me to refine and improve this pilot program.

The bottom line is that Washington should not be imposing a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to assessment. What works in Chicago may not be the answer for Turner, ME, which was named a Blue Ribbon School last year. Assessing the progress of our students is critical, but there are many effective ways to determine students' level of learning.

Fifty years ago and alongside significant civil rights legislation, Congress first passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to improve access to education, particularly for the students from low-income families. Providing a good education for every child must remain a national priority so that each child reaches his or her full potential, has a wide range of opportunities, and can compete in an increasingly global economy. The Every Child Achieves Act honors those guiding principles while returning greater control and flexibility to our States, to local school boards, and to educators.

Again, I thank the chairman and the ranking member of the committee for their work in crafting this bipartisan bill. I look forward to the debate on it in the week to come, and I urge my colleagues to support its passage.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

REMEMBERING ELDER BOYD K. PACKER

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Elder Boyd K. Packer, president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Latter-day Saints, who passed away on July 3, 2015, at the age of 90.

Boyd K. Packer was both a man of principle and a man who knew the power of principles. He taught that talking about principles and doctrines changes behavior far better than talking about behavior changes behavior. He boldly stood as a "watchman on the tower," proclaiming the principles that lead to faithful families, strong communities, and ultimately better nations.

Trained as an educator, Elder Packer was truly a teacher first, last, and always. Whether interacting with an individual, speaking in front of thousands, writing one of his many insightful books, or simply spending time with one of his beloved children, he was forever teaching. And to be clear, he wasn't preaching; he was teaching—

teaching principles that would instruct, inspire, and improve all who came within the sound of his distinct and powerful voice.

Boyd K. Packer understood the important influence of simple stories in teaching. He masterfully wove priceless principles into powerful modern-day parables, keen observations from everyday living, and spiritual lessons that were meaningful and memorable. Experiences such as tuning an old radio, getting his boys to stop wrestling in the living room, visiting a small church in Denmark, carving and painting birds, learning about crocodiles in Africa, or observing the pleadings for help from an orphan boy while serving as a serviceman in Japan, all emerged as foundational stories from which to teach life-changing principles.

Faith and family were always at the center of Elder Packer's teaching, and he often illustrated that the intersection of faith and family is where critical lessons are taught. He illustrated that this intersection between faith and family is precisely where critical lessons are taught and learned and where children are prepared to live nobly and serve selflessly.

In describing how to prepare children for the challenges of life, he thought that children should be provided with a shield of faith and that forming that shield of faith was of necessity a cottage industry. In his own words:

We can teach about the materials from which a shield of faith is made: reverence, courage, repentance, forgiveness, compassion. . . . We can learn how to assemble and fit them together in many places. But the actual making of and fitting on of the shield of faith belongs in the family circle. Otherwise it may loosen and come off in a crisis.

As a "watchman on the tower," Boyd K. Packer was perpetually ahead of his time. He could see around difficult societal corners and had a clear view of the blessings and benefits that flow from principled living. What some may have interpreted as a stern and serious speaking style was simply Elder Packer teaching out of both love and urgency because he could see and he could sense what was on the horizon.

It has been said that the ability to see ahead is both a blessing and a tremendous burden. It is a blessing because you can prepare, and it is a burden because often the people you are trying to help can't see what you can see. Elder Packer's ability to see ahead was unrivaled, occasionally underestimated, but always an unmatched lesson for those who chose to follow the visionary principles he taught.

Elder Packer was indeed a master teacher because he followed, he studied, and he came to know the Master Teacher.

I am confident that the principles Boyd K. Packer shared with the world will continue to impact and improve behavior for generations to come.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO DR. JAMES BILLINGTON

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, at the end of this year, Congress will say farewell to Dr. James Billington, a dear friend who, for the last 28 years, has dedicated his life to ensuring that the Nation's most prominent library is an unparalleled resource for all who visit, either in person or online. Since his nomination by President Reagan in 1987 and subsequent confirmation by the United States Senate, Dr. Billington has led the Library of Congress into the digital era, and expanded its relationships internationally and with the private sector.

For almost three decades, Dr. Billington championed the National Digital Library program, which made millions of rare and one-of-a-kind historical and cultural documents readily available to the public. The National Digital Library was a colossal undertaking and one that students and scholars alike will utilize for many years to come.

In 1990, Dr. Billington created the James Madison Council, an advisory panel that serves as a liaison between the Library and the business community. The Council was the Library's first national private-sector advisory and support group, and has since helped to fund more than 360 projects. Dr. Billington's devotion to the growth and development of the Library of Congress has helped bring a national treasure into the 21st Century and improve access for people all over the country and the world.

Dr. Billington has also worked to expand the Library of Congress' online resources by collaborating with Russian libraries to establish a major bilingual website. He later completed similar joint projects with the national libraries of Brazil, Spain, France, the Netherlands, and Egypt. Dr. Billington spearheaded efforts to create the World Digital Library, which was successfully launched in April 2009. Today, the site contains cultural materials from all 193 countries in the United Nation's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, with commentary in seven languages. As the Librarian of Congress, Dr. Billington led a delegation to Tehran, Iran, in October 2004, making him the most senior U.S. government official to visit Iran in 25 years and furthering his international leadership.

Throughout his 42 years in public service in Washington, Dr. Billington has collaborated on numerous programs such as the Veterans History Project, highlighting the great accomplishments of countless Americans